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ABSTRACT

A study described the amount of usage and structure of cross-age reading tutoring programs. A survey was sent to 68 schools in northwest Ohio to determine percentage and ranges of usage. Results indicated that less than 22% of the 42 elementary schools that responded to the survey used a cross-age tutoring program. Of the programs in place, less than 25% gave formal instruction to their tutors on a regular basis. Most of the schools gave some type of instruction to the tutor. The majority of the tutors were third to sixth graders. The majority of the tutees were first and second graders. Most of the schools surveyed requested further information on cross-age tutoring. Findings suggest that more information on cross-age tutoring needs to be given to elementary school teachers to provide individualized instruction for underachieving readers. (One table of data is included; six figures of data and the survey instrument are attached.) (RS)

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ED 365 964

# Cross-Age Tutoring in the Elementary School in Northwestern Ohio

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Running Head: CROSS- AGE TUTORING IN NORTHWEST OHIO



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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the amount of usage and structure of cross-age reading tutoring programs. A survey was sent to 68 schools in Northwest Ohio to determine percentage and ranges of usage. It was found that less than 22% of the elementary schools (n=42) surveyed used a cross-age tutoring program. Of those programs in place, less than 25% gave formal instruction to their tutors on a regular basis. Most of the schools gave some type of instruction to the tutor. The majority of the tutors were third to sixth graders. The majority of the tutees were first and second graders. Most of the schools surveyed requested further information on cross-age tutoring (76%). It was concluded that more information on usage of cross-age tutoring needs to be given to elementary school teachers to provide individualized instruction for underachieving readers.

# Cross-Age Tutoring in the Elementary School in Northwestern Ohio

The teaching style of today's elementary teacher includes manipulatives, cooperative learning, themeing, integration of the arts, small group and individualized teaching. A typical day does not permit the luxury of much time for one on one instruction needed by students. In order for teachers to meet the needs of each learner, the teacher must rely upon others to help with instruction. Many schools use children to teach each other in a process known as tutoring.

It is commonly believed that children are able to help other children to learn. According to Wagner (1982), the use of students teaching other students dates as far back as the first century A.D. and continues to the present time. This tutoring takes many forms and shapes such as peer-tutoring, cross-age-tutoring and paired reading. Tutoring is a viable technique that gives students supplemental help in various subject areas.

## Statement of the Problem

This paper examined the use of cross-age tutoring for reading in elementary schools in northwestern Ohio. Cross-age tutoring was defined as the process of older students helping younger students to work with

new or difficult concepts. The purpose for this research was to examine the frequency of tutor usage at the elementary grade level, the type of instruction given to the tutors, the time period the tutoring takes place, and the amount of the instruction time given to tutoring.

## Review of Related Literature

The use of students within the same elementary building to work with other students who are having difficulty is one approach that may give students the one on one help they require. Sarbin (1976) stated that juvenile tutors are often more effective than adult classroom teachers. In fact, he reports that a 1975 study showed that children are superior to adult teachers or tutors when making decisions about a student's understanding of a subject.

This extra help is beneficial to both the tutor and the child receiving the instruction. Benefits of the tutoring session are apparent in many areas including gains in academic achievement and attitude towards school. In fact, a study of the literature by Cohen, Kulik and Kulik (1982) showed that gains were usually more apparent for the tutor than the tutee, although significant gains were recognized for both groups. In addition, the social aspects of cross-age tutoring may teach older

children to be protective and nurturing of their "students" in areas outside the classroom such as the playground and cafeteria.

As stated by Harrison (1976), a good tutoring program needs to look at all the elements of the structure of the program very carefully in order to assure a successful program. In order to achieve maximum teaching skills, tutors must use appropriate instructional materials and techniques. Tutors need to be guided by skillful teaching staff in the use of proper teaching practices for individualized instruction.

## Statement of the Hypothesis

It is this researcher's belief that a peer tutoring program can be an important part of the remediation process of students with reading difficulties if a structured program is in place. This research asked how frequently cross-age tutoring takes place in the elementary school. It was hypothesized that most cross-age tutoring programs usually offer informal instruction or instruction as needed to the tutor instead of regular formal instruction. It also hypothesized that the structure of the cross-age tutoring program generally is found at the first grade level for the tutee and at the fifth and sixth grade level for the tutor. It questioned the structure of tutoring taking place during the regular school day and

instruction given on a weekly basis. Furthermore, it postulated that the teachers not presently using a cross-age tutoring program will show an interest in learning about such a program.

## Method

### Subjects

The sample for this study was selected from the elementary schools in Defiance, Fulton, Hancock, Henry, Lucas, Ottawa, Putnam, Sandusky, Van Wert, Williams and Wood Counties in Ohio. One hundred forty-six schools with a first grade class room were identified in this region using the Ohio Educational Directory for the 1992-93 school year. Sixty-eight of these schools were mailed a questionnaire about their use of a cross-age reading program. These schools represented forty-five percent of the elementary schools in Northwest Ohio. The schools that were selected represented rural, urban, private, and public institutions.

### Instrument

A survey was used to identify those schools using cross-age tutoring. If cross-age tutoring was presently being employed, the questionnaire continued with questions about the structure of the program

e.g., time of day it took place, how often the tutoring occurred, frequency of the instructions given to the tutors, the grade of the tutors and tutees, type of school district (suburban, rural, urban), and if more information was desired about cross-age tutoring.

The questionnaire was critiqued by several elementary classroom and Chapter I reading teachers at various grade levels and schools. Several minor revisions were made to the original questionnaire to clear up misunderstanding of wording. The definition of cross-age tutoring was not included in the questionnaire or cover letter because all teachers who critiqued the survey felt this terminology was a known factor to the teaching profession.

Design of the Questionnaire

Seven of the nine questions on the questionnaire related to the usage of cross-age tutoring and the structure of a cross-age tutoring program. All questions appropriate provided an alternative response of "other" to provide an unanticipated answer by the responder. In addition, questions were asked about the demographics of the school and a place was provided for the responder to provide their names for additional information to be sent about cross-age tutoring if they so desired.

Procedure

The survey containing a cover letter, questionnaire and a stamped, addressed return envelope was sent to area schools in northwest Ohio (see Appendix). The letters were directed to the Chapter I reading teacher because it was believed that they would be the most informed of such a program taking place in their school to help underachievers. A return date of approximately ten days after receiving the survey was requested.

## Results

The results of the questionnaire showed that 62% (n=68) of those who were sent the questionnaire responded. Of the 42 respondents, only 22% indicated that their school used cross-age tutoring at the elementary level (see Appendix, Figure 1) which does not support the hypothesis that elementary schools frequently use cross-age tutoring.

The shape of the cross-age tutoring program was studied to determine if a structure was in place. The most important aspect of this structure was the amount of instruction given to the tutor. It was found that 78% of the time (Appendix, Figure 2), the tutor was given informal instruction or instructions as needed. The regular formal instruction represented only 22% of the instruction given to the tutor. The results

indicated that the tutee is generally in the first or second grade and the tutors are in the third, fifth and sixth grade (Appendix, Figure 3). The hypothesis was again supported by the structure of the cross-age tutoring which took place during the day with 90% of the instruction occurring during this time frame (Appendix, Figure 4). The tutoring programs were held on a daily basis 50% of the time, on a weekly basis 30 % of the time, and biweekly 20% of the time (Appendix, Figure 6).

Most of the respondents indicated that they would be interested (76%) in receiving further information about a cross-age tutoring program (Appendix, Figure 6).

The schools that responded to the questionnaire represented a cross-section of suburban, rural and urban schools in northwestern Ohio which is largely a rural area.

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Table I

Demographics of Elementary Schools

(n=42)

| Rural | Suburban | Urban | Not Indicated |
|---|---|---|---|
| 19 | 10 | 9 | 4 |

## Discussion

The results of this study does not support the hypothesis that cross-age tutoring is frequently used at the elementary level. This was a surprising result given the amount of literature that is available to the education profession in regard to the positive results of such programs. It was noted by Harrison (1976) that there is a trend toward an increase in the use of tutoring in the schools. Koskinen and Wilson (1982) state that the tutoring movement has become an integral part of the individualized instruction so often found in today's schools.

The hypothesis that tutors receive only informal instructions or instruction as needed instead of regular formal instruction was supported. However, research indicates that it is important to give the tutors formal instruction on a regular basis. Lippitt (1976) states that the training of the tutor cannot be "overestimated". She stresses that careful instruction be given to the tutor and that this training is necessary to the success of the program. One wonders why more training is not given to the tutors given the amount of research that indicates that this is essential.

The fact that the research of the structure of the cross-age tutoring was based on only nine schools, due to the low percentage of schools using cross-age tutoring, may influence the results of the type of cross-age

program in northwest Ohio. The basis of researching this project was to show that cross-age tutoring is an essential part of today's teaching. Along with this, it is imperative that the most important element of the program is the training of the tutor. It is interesting that neither of these practices are apparent in the elementary classroom in northwest Ohio. One wonders why this is so if the research indicates that cross-age tutoring is so successful and the training of the tutor is the most important element of the program.

It was observed that high percentage of teachers are interested in further information about a cross-age tutoring program. Conclusions drawn from this are that although the research shows that such programs are effective, teachers are not aware of this information or do not have the time or help needed to put such a program into action. It is unfortunate that more programs of this type are not available to underachieving readers to individualize their instruction.

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## Appendix

Figure 1

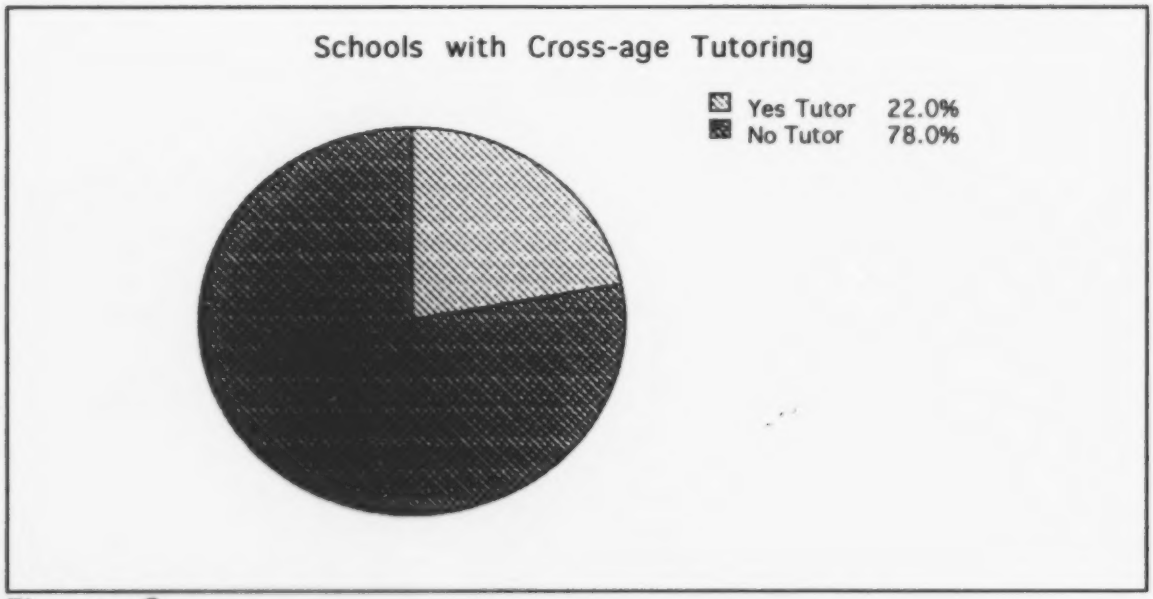



Figure 2

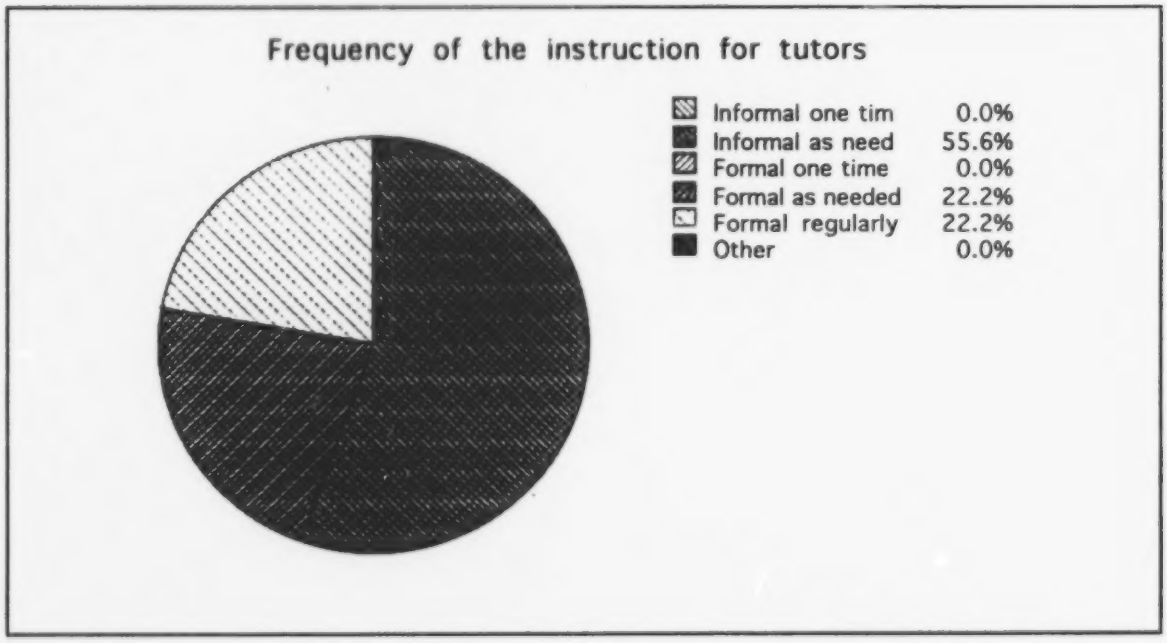
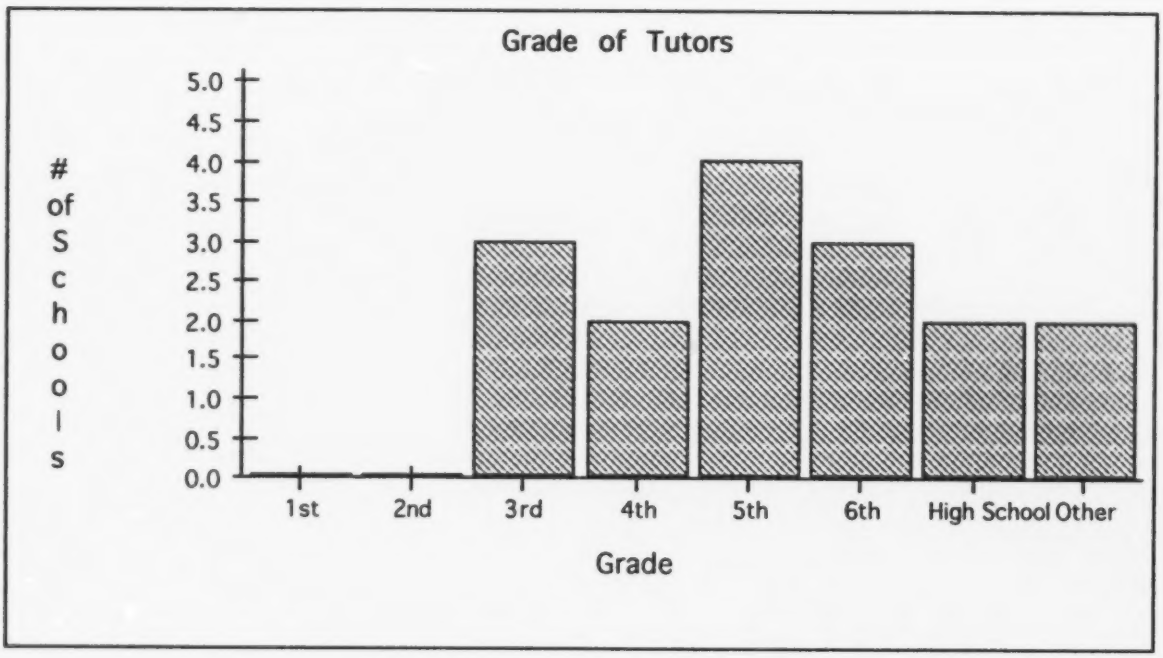


Figure 3


Grade of Tutors
# of Schools
5.0
4.5
4.0
3.5
3.0
2.5
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
High School
Other
Grade

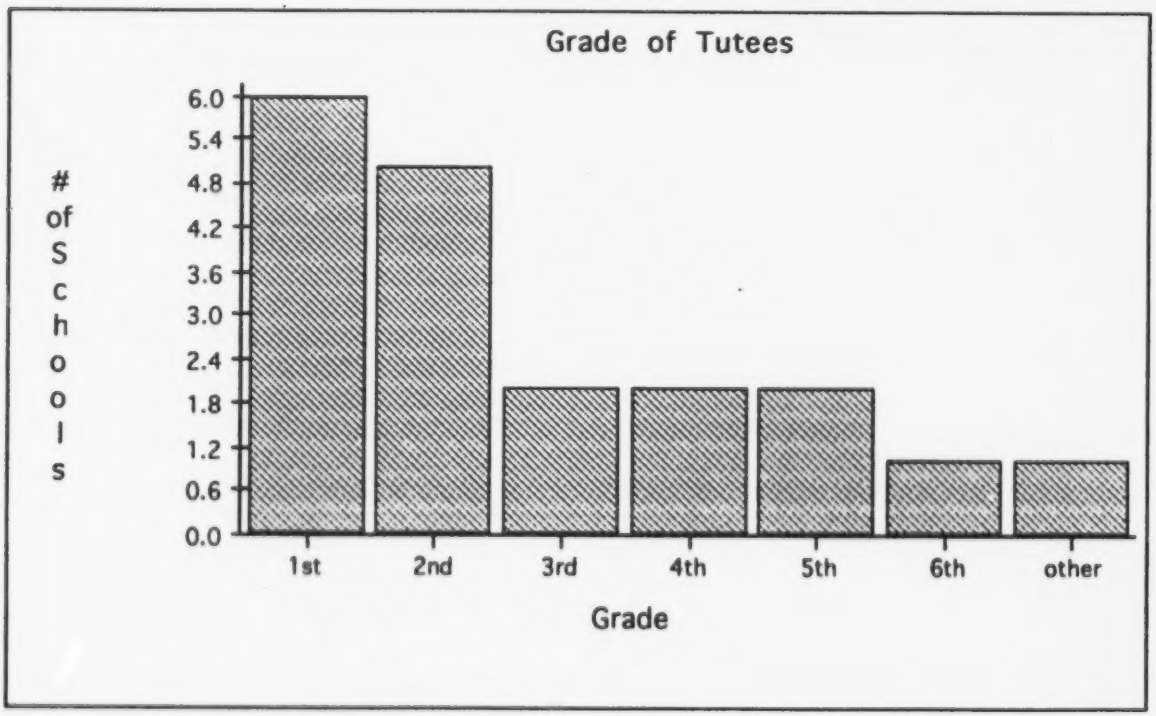

Grade of Tutees
# of Schools
6.0
5.4
4.8
4.2
3.6
3.0
2.4
1.8
1.2
0.6
0.0
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th
other
Grade

Figure 4

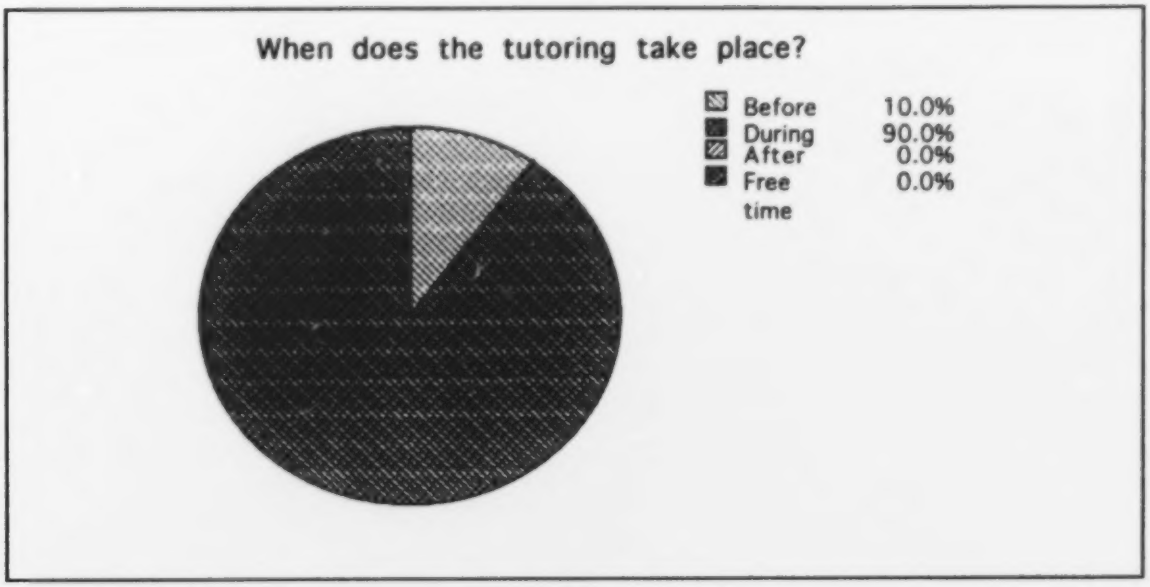



Figure 5

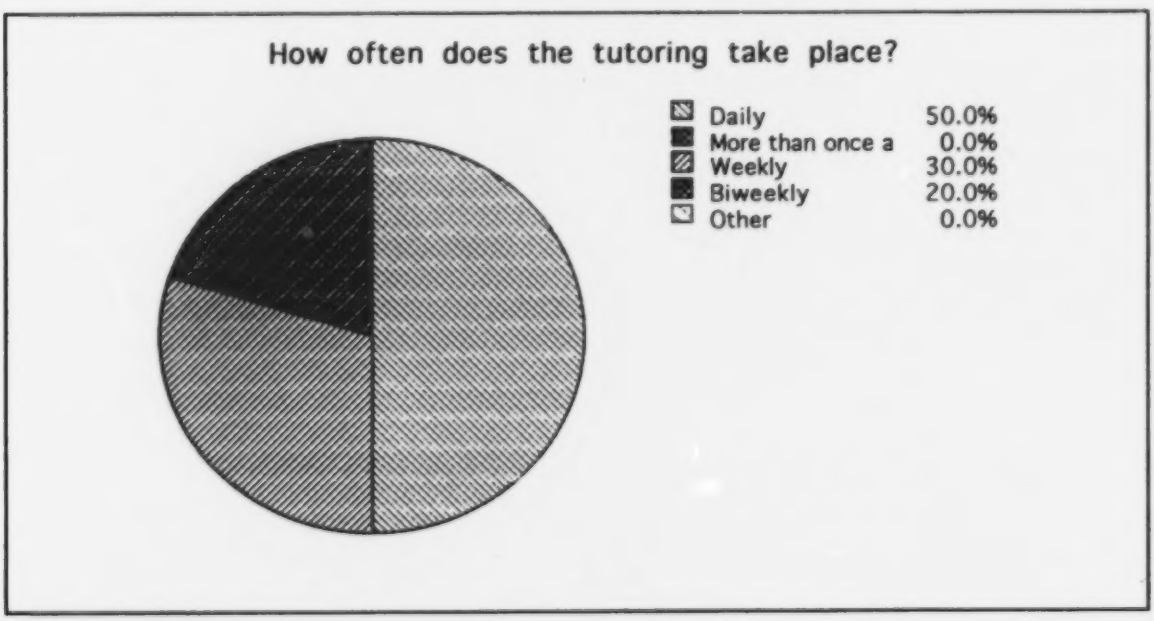
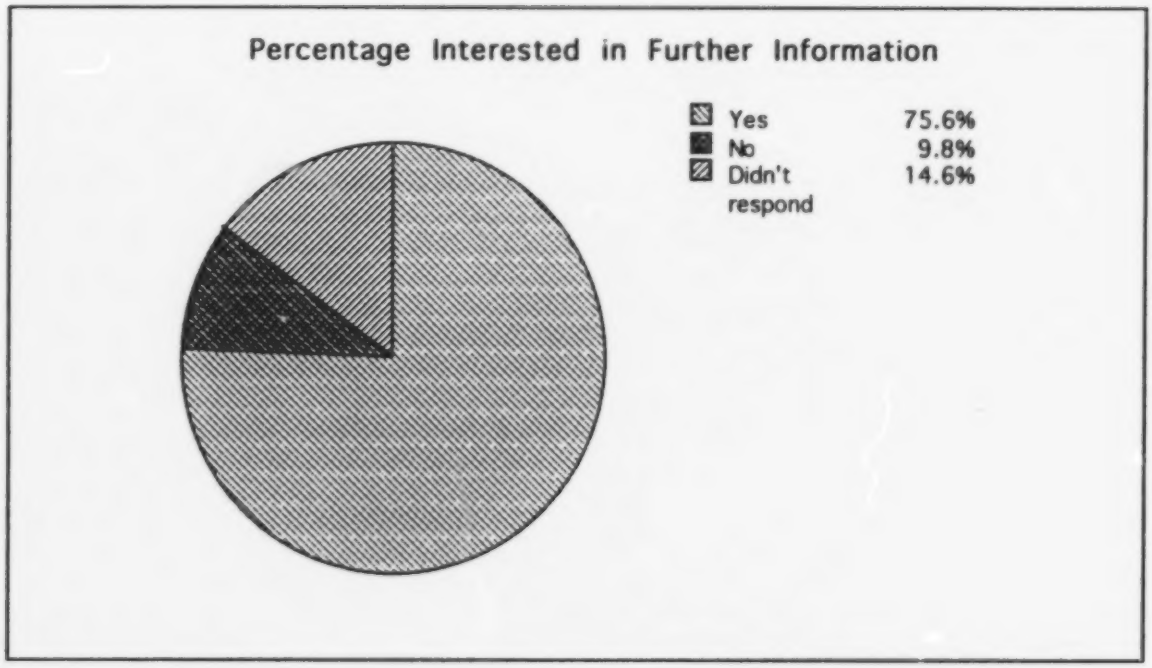


Figure 6


Percentage Interested in Further Information
Yes 75.6%
No 9.8%
Didn't respond 14.6%

October 10, 1993

Dear Colleague,

I am gathering information concerning cross-age tutoring at the elementary level. I would appreciate your time in filling out the following questionnaire. Please answer these questions as they relate to your elementary building. If you teach at two elementary buildings, a separate questionnaire has been sent to each school. I would be grateful if you would reply as soon as possible using the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Janet Day
Reading Specialist
Fort Meigs Elementary

# Reading Tutoring

Do you use cross-age tutoring for reading in your elementary school?

YES NO

If you answered no, would you be interested in receiving information about such a program?

YES NO

If you answered yes, please continue with the following:

When does the tutoring take place?

____ Before school

____ During School

____ After School

____ During student free time (recess, etc.)

____ Other _____

How often does the tutoring take place?

____ Daily

____ More than once a week

____ Weekly

____ Biweekly

____ Other _____

Describe the frequency of the instructions given to the tutors:

____ Informal instructions given one time only

____ Informal instructions given as needed

____ Formal instructions given one time only

____ Formal instructions given one time and feedback given as needed

____ Formal instruction given on a regular basis

____ Other _____

Circle the grade levels of the tutors:

1 2 3 4 5 6 Other _____

Circle the grade levels of the tutees:

1 2 3 4 5 6 Other _____

Is your school described as:

____ City ____ Rural ____ Suburban

Please fill in your name, position and address (OPTIONAL):

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please return by October 23,1993
Thank you!